

# **INTRODUCTION**

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# INTRODUCTION

## Where is Winchester?

The Town of Winchester is located in northwest Winnebago County, Wisconsin. The Town enjoys a blend of family farming operations and residential development. In total, the township includes approximately 36 square miles and is home to about 1,700 people.

The Town of Winchester shares borders with: Outagamie County, the Town of Wolf River, the Town of Winneconne, and the Town of Clayton.

INDEX MAP FOR WINNEBAGO COUNTY WI



Several important regional highway corridors traverse the Town. These corridors allow residents to reach Waupaca, Oshkosh, and the Fox Cities in approximately 20 minutes.

## How was Winchester Settled?<sup>1</sup>

The area that was to become Winchester Township was originally occupied by bands of Indians belonging to various tribes. The two tribes living in Winnebago County were the Menomonees and the Winnebagos. The Menomonees had claimed and held all the land in Winnebago County, while the Winnebagos only lived in this area by permission. For the privilege of living in this area the Winnebagos "paid an annual tribute to the Menomonees, consisting of corn, potatoes and dried pumpkin".

In 1835, near the end of the period of Indian ownership, the first commercial logging took place in the area. Logs were cut along the Rat River by men in the employ of Daniel Whitney of Green Bay.

On September 3, 1836, Henry Dodge, the territorial governor, and the Menomonee Indians, signed the Treaty of Cedar Point. According to this treaty the Menomonees agreed to give up their lands north of the Fox River and east of the Wolf River. The treaty would eventually open up northern Winnebago County, including the future Town of Winchester, to settlement. Although the treaty was signed in 1836, it was several years before the land became available for sale at the government land offices in Green Bay. First the land had to be surveyed. At that time, the area that would later become Winchester Township was given the following designation for map surveying purposes - Township 20N (North) Range 15E (East). When the land in Township 20N Range 15E was made available for purchase, the price was \$1.25 per acre.

The first settlers began to arrive during the mid 1800s. Over the next several years, families which had recently come from Europe and families whose immigrant ancestors arrived in America many years earlier began to purchase parcels of land within Winchester. Probably the largest groups of settlers were Norwegians, some of whom had just immigrated to America and some whose families may have come to America as early as 1839 or the early 1840's. Besides the Norwegians, some of the first settlers in this area came from the East Coast region or were recent immigrants from Wales.

A few years later, German settlers arrived. Most, if not all, of the German settlers purchased parcels of land in the western portion of the township, as the Norwegians and others had already settled most of the eastern portion of the Town.

### WINCHESTER -- What's in a Name?

It is not known how the name "Winchester" was chosen. We can eliminate several possibilities at the outset. The Town is not named for the famous Winchester rifle because it did not make its appearance until several years after our township was formed. It is also unlikely that the Town is named after some person or family because no person with the surname Winchester has ever lived in our township.

In an interview with Hazel Kevill, who was born and raised in Winchester, she indicated "it was named after a Winchester in England." Hazel was a descendent of an old "Yankee" family, but unlike most of the Yankees, her family emigrated directly from England to Wisconsin. There were a number of these so-called Yankee families that had come directly to the U.S. at just about the time the Town was established.

The City of Winchester in southern England has had an important role in English history. There are associations with the legendary King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table. There is also a famous cathedral, as well as a famous prep school boys called Winchester College.

When settlers came to the New World, it is not surprising that they would choose names from their homelands. There are Winchesters in 19 states. Wisconsin is blessed with 2 Winchesters- our Winchester in Winnebago County and another in Vilas County, much to the confusion of postal workers and others.

It is also entirely possible that our Winchester could have been named after a town by that name in one of the eastern states from which some of our early settlers came.

<sup>1</sup> Information taken from [www.townofwinchester.info](http://www.townofwinchester.info) based on excerpts from *The History of the Town of Winchester* published by the Winchester Historical Society. Copies are available from the Town Clerk.

## **When was the Town of Winchester Organized?**

The Winnebago County Board organized the Town of Winchester by an order dated November 11, 1851. The area that was to become the Town of Winchester was part of the Town of Winneconne until the order took effect on April 6, 1852. The order noted that the Town of Winchester was to be comprised of all of Township 20N Range 15E, and fractional parts of Townships 19 and 20, Range 14, located east of the Wolf River.

Winchester's boundaries were changed in 1855 when the Town of Orihula (later known as the Town of Wolf River) was created from the Towns of Winchester and Winneconne. The land in Township 20N Range 15E, east of the Wolf River and west of the cut off and west of the section line, between Sections 22 and 23, was taken from Winchester Township and made part of Wolf River Township in 1877. On January 8, 1873, the sections located in Township 20N Range 14E were also taken from Winchester and attached to the Town of Wolf River, thus establishing the present boundaries of Winchester Township.

## **Town Planning History**

In 2003, the Town of Winchester Board decided to develop a comprehensive plan. Prior to making this decision, the Town had already developed the Transportation Element of its Comprehensive Plan and completed a Landowner Survey/Interview effort.

The decision to develop this plan was made to ensure that the Town will continue to have a say in land use decisions after 2010 -- as is stipulated in the Wisconsin Smart Growth Law (1999 Wisconsin Act 9). Town leaders sought assistance from OMNNI Associates, a consulting firm based in Appleton, WI. OMNNI's staff was selected to facilitate a community-based planning program including visioning, strengths and weakness identification, and the development of GIS-based maps. This community-based planning approach helped the Town to identify and address important land use, resource protection, and development issues.

Developing this comprehensive plan sends a clear message that the Town of Winchester wishes to be proactive – to set its own ground rules for the types of development that will benefit the Town, maintain its rural atmosphere and provide flexibility for landowners.

## **Why Develop a Plan?**

This plan is being made with the general purpose of guiding a coordinated and harmonious development of the Town, which will, in accordance with existing and future needs, promote public health, safety, morals, order, convenience, and general welfare, as well as promote efficiency and economy in the process of development.

## Scope of the Plan

This 20-year Comprehensive Plan includes four major components:

1. A profile of the Town's demographic, economic and housing characteristics;
2. An inventory and assessment of the Town's environment, community facilities, and natural resources;
3. Visions, goals, objectives and implementation strategies; and
4. Maps that depict existing and future land use patterns.

This plan was developed under the authority of 1999 Wisconsin Act 9, Wisconsin's "Smart Growth" Law. The law requires that a 20-year comprehensive plan be developed and adopted by all units of government that wish to have a say in land use decisions. The law authorizes municipalities to prepare and adopt comprehensive plans, alone or in cooperation with other communities, to serve as guides for the development of their communities.

The Smart Growth Law defines, for the first time, what is meant by a "comprehensive plan" in Wisconsin. It includes 9 required elements. These are:

- 1) Issues and Opportunities
- 2) Housing
- 3) Transportation
- 4) Utilities and Community Facilities
- 5) Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources
- 6) Economic Development
- 7) Intergovernmental Coordination
- 8) Land Use
- 9) Implementation



In addition, the state requires that these elements be developed in concert with Wisconsin's 14 goals for local planning, which are:

- 1) Promotion of the redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and public services and the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing residential, commercial and industrial structures.
- 2) Encouragement of neighborhood designs that support a range of transportation choices.
- 3) Protection of natural areas, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, lakes, woodlands, open spaces and groundwater resources.

### DEFINITIONS

**Vision:** An overall statement related to each of the 9 required elements expressing the Town's expectations for the future. These statements provide a framework and context to consider when making future land use decisions.

**Goal:** A statement that describes, usually in general terms, a desired future condition. Goals will usually only address one specific aspect of the vision.

**Objective:** A statement that describes a specific action or condition that is to be attained within a stated period of time. Objectives include ordinance changes, new programs, and other tasks. The objectives serve as a "to do" list to implement the plan. To be effective, objectives must be evaluated regularly and updated as necessary.

**Policy:** A course of action, or rule of conduct, used to achieve the goals and objectives of the plan. Policies are based on specific research. Therefore, they are developed after vision statements. In some cases, the policies relate closely to the vision, but provide more refined, specific actions.

- 4) Protection of economically productive areas, including farmland and forests.
- 5) Encouragement of land uses, densities and regulations that promote efficient development patterns and relatively low municipal, state governmental and utility costs.
- 6) Preservation of cultural, historic and archeological sites.
- 7) Encouragement of coordination and cooperation among nearby units of government.
- 8) Building of community identity by revitalizing main streets and enforcing design standards.
- 9) Providing an adequate supply of affordable housing for individuals of all income levels throughout each community.
- 10) Providing adequate infrastructure and public services and an adequate supply of developable land to meet existing and future market demand for residential, commercial and industrial uses.
- 11) Promoting the expansion or stabilization of the current economic base and the creation of a range of employment opportunities at the state, regional and local levels.
- 12) Balancing individual property rights with community interests and goals.
- 13) Planning and development of land uses that create or preserve varied and unique urban and rural communities.
- 14) Providing an integrated, efficient and economical transportation system that affords mobility, convenience, and safety that meets the needs of all citizens, including transit-dependent and disabled citizens.

## Public Involvement

The Town of Winchester Comprehensive Plan was developed in an environment rich with opportunities for public input. To gain citizen understanding and support throughout the planning process, the public was provided with a variety of meaningful opportunities to become involved in the process. Public input was facilitated through several meetings and activities, including a community survey. Results of the survey, copies of meeting agendas, as well as the *Public Participation Plan and Adoption Procedures* are provided in the appendix of this plan.

What follows is a description of some of the primary opportunities for public education and input in the planning program.

### Kick-Off Meeting



The Town of Winchester “kick-off” meeting was held on April 29, 2003 at the Town of Winchester Hall. At the meeting, OMNNI Associates presented an overview of the planning process and provided general information to the public about Smart Growth and its importance to the Town of Winchester. The meeting concluded with a discussion of area values (presented at the end of this chapter). Interested residents were advised on how they can keep informed about, and become involved with, the comprehensive planning process.

## **Community Issues Exercise (SWOT)**

Held as part of the Kick-Off Meeting, this exercise provided the Plan Commission and residents an opportunity to identify and evaluate Town strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This information was used to develop draft goals for the Town of Winchester Comprehensive Plan and to complete the Issues and Opportunities Element.

## **Plan Commission Meetings**

The Plan Commission met twice a month to review draft text and maps and establish goals and priorities for plan implementation. Each meeting was duly posted and open to the public.

## **Mid-Course Meeting**

At the mid-point of the planning process, the Plan Commission hosted an informational meeting to share with the public what had been happening in the planning program and what was yet to be done. At the meeting, OMNNI presented an overview of progress on the planning program, shared the vision statements developed by the Plan Commission and encouraged the public to participate in the process to provide additional input.

## **Map Forum**

At the map forum, held in conjunction with the Mid-Course Meeting, a preliminary set of plan maps was displayed for residents, property owners and business owners to review and comment upon. This opportunity allowed participants to find “their property” and comment on the maps.

## **Open House**

The purpose of the plan “open house” was to display the plan maps and text in an informal setting. At the “open house,” there were no formal presentations, minutes, or voting. Rather, the maps and plan text were on display for interested residents to review at their own pace. The atmosphere was as casual as possible with refreshments being served. Members of the Plan Commission and OMNNI staff were available to answer questions as needed. This meeting was a success in that it allowed the participants to share their ideas in a setting that was much less formal than the public hearing. As a result, more people were able to react to the plan than would have otherwise done so, if only a formal public hearing had been held.

## **Internet Web Page**

The planning program was profiled on an interactive web page hosted by OMNNI Associates. The page included meeting schedules, summaries of past meetings, draft maps and plan

chapters, plus general educational materials about the Comprehensive Planning Law. The site was updated on a monthly basis to ensure that the information was current and would effectively inform the public. A link to the site was also provided from the Town's web page.

## Landowner Interviews/Survey

The Town of Winchester conducted a survey and series of interviews with landowners during the winter of 2002. This effort generated a lot of ideas, concerns, and expectations for the community. The results served as a gauge of community interest. Information from the community survey is highlighted throughout this plan.

## Intergovernmental Meeting

As part of the planning program, the Plan Commission facilitated an Intergovernmental Meeting. At the meeting, the draft *20-Year Town of Winchester Future Land Use Map* was presented for initial comment and feedback. Existing or anticipated plans from neighboring units of government, the school districts, Winnebago County, the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, WDNR and WisDOT were discussed in relation to the draft map.

Based on the conversations and suggestions received at this meeting, the Town of Winchester Comprehensive Plan includes recommendations to continue to resolve intergovernmental planning issues and conflicts over the 20-year planning period.

## Town Values

During the Kick-Off Meeting, residents were asked to identify the values that influence people to remain, take pride in, and become actively involved in the community. The complete list of those values is provided below. These value statements provided a clear direction for the development and implementation of the plan. Moreover, these values clearly indicate that residents share a strong sense of community identity and pride closely associated with the rural character and natural areas that make the Town of Winchester a desirable place to live.

We value the Town's rural, country atmosphere  
We value the quiet and peaceful environment

We value the clean, fresh air  
We value the friendly, caring people  
We value our sense of history  
We value the small town charm - people know each other

We value the fair town taxes  
We value our quality water supply  
We value our roads  
We value our low crime rate

We value our great schools  
We value our local churches

We value our local farms  
We value our beautiful natural resources

We value our wildlife habitats  
We value open space - whether agricultural or "green space"

We value our scenic vistas  
We value our location - quick access to Valley and Waupaca (employment & shopping centers)